



sunnyvale **renews**

Biodegradable and Compostable Food Containers: Sorting Out the Confusion

You may have noticed the many “eco-friendly” alternatives to traditional types of disposable take-out containers such as cups, plates, and cutlery showing up at restaurants, work cafeterias and even grocery stores. These containers are made from plant-based materials such as corn, sugar cane or paper. Using these products is a preferred alternative to use of expanded polystyrene plastic foam containers, which make their way into water ways. However, figuring out how to dispose or recycle these new packaging types can be confusing. Let’s see if we can help answer some of the questions you might have:

Q: What is the difference between biodegradable and compostable?

A: Biodegradable means that if a substance or material is adequately exposed to the elements: sun, rain, water, and air, it will break down completely and return to nature within a reasonably short period of time. Compostable means that if a material is combined with decaying biodegradable matter in a managed compost pile it will eventually become nutrient-rich “compost” that can be used as a soil amendment.

Q: Can biodegradable cups be recycled, they look just like recyclable plastic cups?



A: Because biodegradable “plastics” are made from corn, sugar cane and other plant based materials, not petroleum, they cannot be recycled because they contaminate the recycling processes. These containers should have a biocompostable symbol or the words “compostable,” “biodegradable,” or “#7 PLA” on their side or bottom. If a container instead has the symbol for recyclable plastic with a #1-7, it can be recycled in your curbside recycling bin.

Q: What do I do with polystyrene foam cups and take-out containers?

A: Polystyrene foam (EPS), commonly, but incorrectly, referred to as Styro-foam, is made from a non-renewable resource and is a significant source of litter in our creeks and San Francisco Bay. Avoiding the purchase and use of this material is the best choice. It is virtually impossible to recycle EPS items that have contained food or beverages.

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Honey Bee – Relocation. It's a Real FreeBee!

Have bees? Want a solution?

According to National Geographic, bees are responsible for 15 to 30 percent of the food U.S. consumers eat. But in the last 50 years the domesticated honeybee population—which most farmers depend on for pollination—has declined by about 50 percent. Scientists say their decline is mostly the result of diseases spread due to mites and other parasites as well as the spraying of crops with pesticides.

Any opportunity we have to save bees or relocate them somewhere else increases their chance of survival. It turns out that some honey bees love the Sunnyvale split-lid recycling carts. In one case a hive even made honey in a cart! A local Bee Guild beekeeper came to the rescue and moved the bees.

Keeping your cart clean by rinsing it out in your yard periodically will help keep bees from setting up a hive in your cart. If you have bees around your home or business that you would like to have relocated, see the bee keepers list at www.beeguild.org or call 408.634.BEES (2337).

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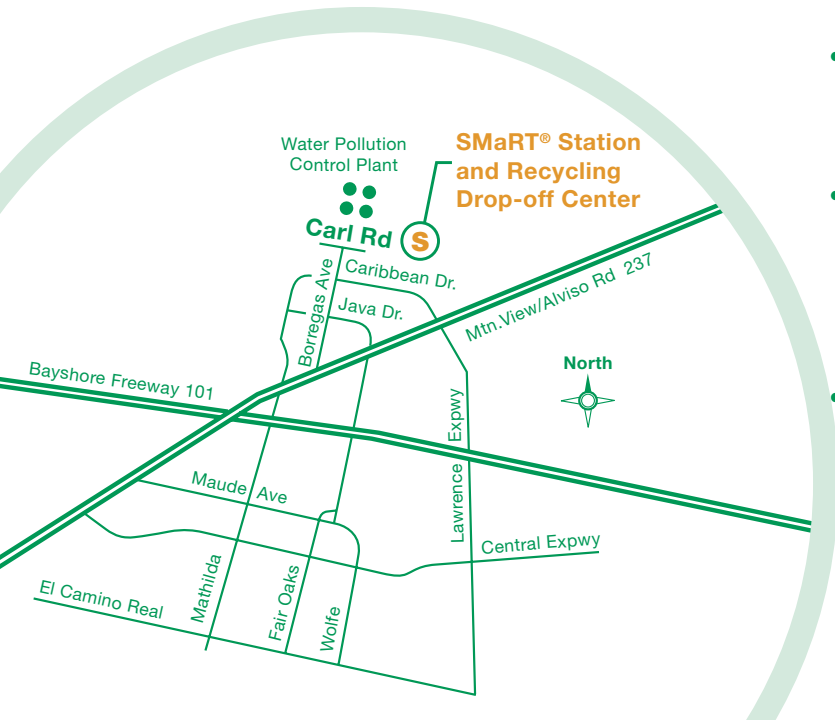
New at SMaRT – Paper Shredding Events

Saturday Aug. 28 & Dec. 18

8 a.m. to 11 a.m.
301 Carl Rd., Sunnyvale

Quarterly paper shredding events for Sunnyvale, Mountain View and Palo Alto residents are now offered at the SMaRT Recycling Center. Each household may bring up to 5 “banker” boxes or bags of personal paper documents to shred.

- Residents will be required to provide proof of Sunnyvale residency; commercial/business customers will not be admitted to the events.
- Volunteers will be available to direct traffic and provide assistance in off-loading boxes for residents.
- Paperclips, staples, spiral notebooks, and rubber bands are acceptable. However, refrain from disposing of heavy binders or binder clips to prevent damage to shredding equipment.
- Limit materials for shredding to personal documents. Other recyclable paper products may be put in residential recycling carts as part of regular curbside recycling collection services, or in the recycling bins at the SMaRT Recycling Center.
- All collected materials will be shredded on site by Cintas and recycled into useful paper products.



Special Events

Summer Compost Workshops

Sunnyvale's popular compost workshops began in 1992 and continue to offer residents an easy, convenient way to keep organic material such as food scraps and yard trimmings out of the garbage. This easy-to-learn system provides residents with a convenient way to enrich the soil in their own yards and contribute to a healthier environment in the community. Vermicomposting (or worm box composting) is also demonstrated.

The workshops are facilitated by experienced gardeners and Master Composters on the second Saturday of each month (no workshops in November and December). Residents may register online at www.recycling.insunnyvale.com (go to Events to find workshop registration) or by calling (408) 730-7262 or TDD (408) 730-7501.

Jul. 10, Aug. 14 & Sep. 11

**10 a.m. to Noon
Sunnyvale Community Center
Heritage Building
550 E. Remington Drive**



Containers: Sorting Out the Confusion (cont'd)

Q: Can I put biodegradable or compostable food containers in my home compost bin?

A: Biodegradable and compostable food containers do best in a commercial composting system where they are kept at high temperatures and turned often. You can place compostable containers in your home compost bin but they may take longer than other items to break down into compost. Avoid placing biodegradable containers in your bin—they don't break down. For more information about home composting check out www.recycling.insunnyvale.com

Here are several alternatives for using disposable containers:

- Bring your own reusable containers to restaurants and avoid purchasing disposable food containers.
- If you do purchase compostable containers, remember to compost them at home or dispose of them in your regular garbage.
- Ask the restaurant or store to switch from using polystyrene to a recyclable, biodegradable, or compostable container (while the biodegradable/compostable containers also must usually be disposed in the trash, they are not known to cause the litter problems that polystyrene does) and are made from renewable resources.

– Read about it. A good article can be found on Smithsonian Magazine's website at: www.smithsonianmag.com (search for "Corn Plastic")

For more ideas see what others are doing at www.takeoutwithout.com

ReUse: Give It Away by Connecting Online With Someone Who Wants it!

You've heard of the saying, "one person's trash is another person's treasure" and several online organizations are all about connecting people to give stuff away. Online recycling utilizes the enormous networking capacity of the internet to link people who want to give stuff away with those who want the stuff. No money changes hands with this system; which provides a clearinghouse for users to exchange things so they don't end up in the landfill. Check out Sunnyvale Free at groups.yahoo.com/groups/sunnyvalefree or Sunnyvale Freecycle at www.freecycle.org.

Cooking Oil – Collected at SMaRT®

Cooking oil is now included in the items accepted from residents at the SMaRT Recycling Center. The requirements are:

- Cooking oil must be from residential use
- Cooking oil must be given directly to the recycling center attendant
- Containers – Plastic only, with a secure lid
- Containers limited to 5-gallon capacity, 10 gallons per visit
- Containers will not be returned

It is important to keep all liquids, including cooking oil, out of the garbage and this new service provides a convenient disposal option. The cooking oil delivered to the SMaRT Recycling Center is collected by San Jose Tallow, where it is processed and eventually made into new products ranging from candles and soap to biodiesel fuel stock. . . another example of reusing resources rather than wasting them.

Extra Waste? Make An On-call Appointment

Are you finding you have extra household goods to dispose? If so, you may call to set an appointment for an extra curbside collection. Each household is provided with two extra collections each year for no additional charge. It's a year 'round feature (not limited to a few weeks in spring or fall).

For each on-call appointment, you may put out 2 cubic yards of non-hazardous household waste plus two bulky items like furniture or appliances.

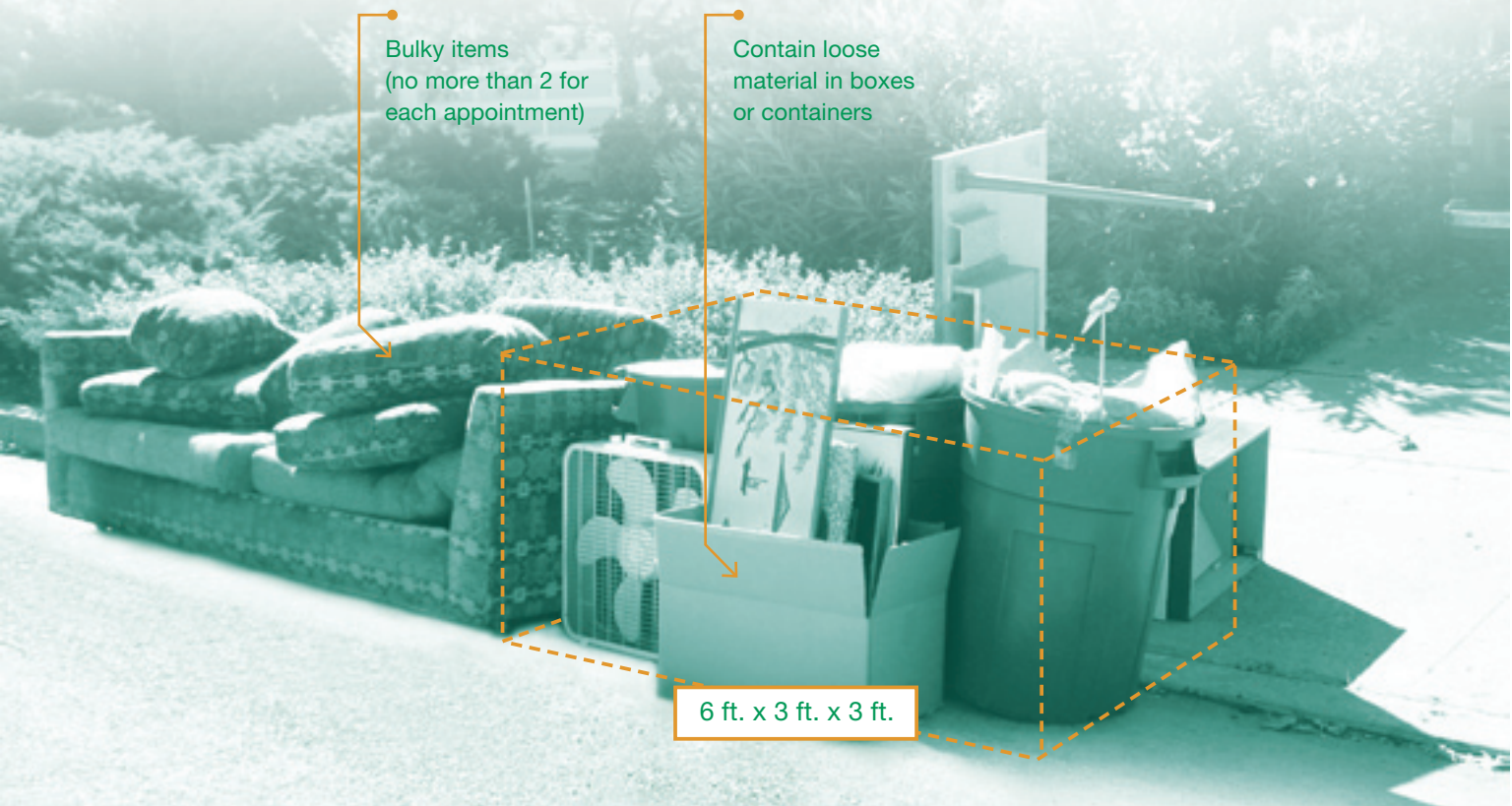
To set an appointment, contact Utilities Customer Service at (408) 730-7400 and let them know the types of items you will be setting out. Make sure that all smaller items are contained in either bags or boxes.

On-Call Collection appointments are scheduled on regular garbage service days. If you want next-day

service, just call before 2 p.m. the day before your regular pick up day.

- Items accepted include appliances, furniture, electronic goods, and non-hazardous trash. No construction or demolition materials.
- Maximum two bulky items, plus two cubic yards of trash (6 ft. x 3 ft. x 3 ft.).
- Put loose material in garbage bags, boxes, or other containers. Tie up carpets and large branches, and tape appliance doors closed.
- Stack items neatly at the curbside, away from traffic.
- Before you call, stop and consider: Can any of the items be reused by someone else? If so, take them to a local reuse organization.

How to Place Your Items Curbside for On-call Collection





**It's SMaRT to Recycle®
this Summer**

Seven days a week

**8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
301 Carl Rd., Sunnyvale (see map)**

Recycling and reducing what we “trash” is a smart idea any time of year. During the summer when perhaps you’re on a more leisurely schedule is an ideal time to inspire the members of your household to practice more recycling and waste reduction behaviors.

Going on a picnic?

- Pack reusable dishes and silverware
- Bring your own reusable water bottle
- Avoid plastic ware and foam or paper plates and napkins
- Avoid over-packaged foods and single serving packaged foods

In addition to curbside recycling services, the City provides an easy-to-use recycling drop-off area at the SMaRT Station. Among the many items that you may bring to the recycling center for no charge are:

- Mixed paper
- Metal, glass and plastic containers (types #1 - #7)
- Cardboard boxes
- Household batteries
- Fluorescent lighting (tubes, coils, bulbs)
- Electronic equipment (monitors, TVs, computers)
- Cooking oil (new-see related article)

For a complete list visit www.recycling.insunnyvale.com or call the Recycling Program at (408) 730-7262.

Recycling at Home – What Can Be Recycled

Recycling is easy and convenient. Please prepare your materials as follows:

What We'll Take at Curbside

Mixed paper

Place in paper side of split-lid recycling cart (green lid)

- Newspapers, junk mail and envelopes
- White, colored and glossy paper
- Catalogs, magazines and paperback books
- Paper egg cartons
- Staples, paper clips, labels and tape are OK
- Non-metallic gift wrap

Motor oil

Put in clear, one-gallon, non-breakable jug with screw-top lid, place at curb.

Oil filters

Seal in heavy-duty plastic bag. Gallon jug and oil filter bags available upon request at (408) 730-7400.

Household batteries

Place adhesive tape over positive (+) end, seal in plastic bag. Place on top of split-lid recycling cart

Glass, metal and plastic food and beverage containers #1 through #7 (No food, no liquid)

Place in container side of split-lid cart

- Glass items include food and beverage bottles, jars, wine and oil bottles, etc. (See complete list of what's accepted at www.recycling.insunnyvale.com).

Yard trimmings

Branches should be no larger than 6 inches in diameter and cut into 4 foot or shorter length. Bundle and place beside yard trimmings cart (keep bundles under 1 foot in diameter).

Corrugated cardboard

Bundle no larger than 30" x 30" x 6" in size; place beside recycling cart.

Have other questions?

Call (408) 730-7262 or visit www.recycling.insunnyvale.com and click "Single Family" under "Recycling Services."



**New Recycling Service
Guide Online**

A new garbage and recycling service guide is available for residents with curbside service. The guide covers how to handle most household items. It also includes the services provided at the SMaRT Station and the Household Hazardous Waste events. See it online at www.recycling.insunnyvale.com or have a copy sent by calling (408) 730-7262.



**Sustainability
Newsletter**

Get important environmental news. Sign up for Sunnyvale's new *Sustainable Sunnyvale* electronic newsletter at www.recycling.insunnyvale.com.



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Follow the City of Sunnyvale Recycling program on Twitter to keep posted on events and ideas.
<http://twitter.com/SunnyvaleRecycl>



Contact Information

City of Sunnyvale, Garbage and Recycling Services (All numbers in Area Code 408.)

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|-------------------------------|----------|
| – Customer Service, Utilities | 730-7400 |
| – Appointments, On-call | 730-7400 |
| – Billing Questions | 730-7400 |
| – Cart repair or replacement | 730-7400 |
| – Recycling Questions | 730-7262 |

Specialty Solid Waste & Recycling

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|--|----------|
| – Service questions or missed pick ups | 565-9900 |
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